United Nations Human Rights Council

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Easy-to-read

How human rights can be part of mental health services





This is an easy-to-read report from the **United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** (**OHCHR**).

The **OHCHR** is part of the **United Nations** or the **UN**.

The **UN** was set up in **1945** so that all countries could work together to make the world better and safer.



OHCHR makes sure that everyone in the world knows and uses their **human rights**.



Everyone has human rights and should have them no matter who they are or where they live.



Human rights include:

- the right to life
- the right to freedom
- many other rights.



For example, everyone has the right to get the best mental healthcare.



This easy-to-read report:

- Looks at **what stops** human rights from being included in mental healthcare

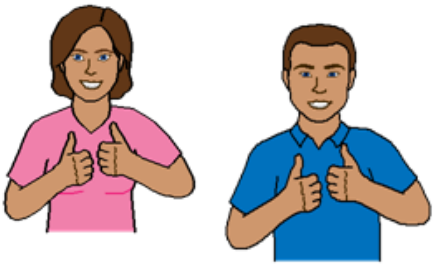


- Suggests how **human rights** should be part of mental healthcare all over the world.



The report says that healthcare:

- Should be available **in the community**



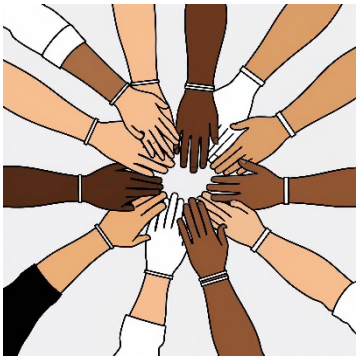
- Should treat people well and with **respec**t.



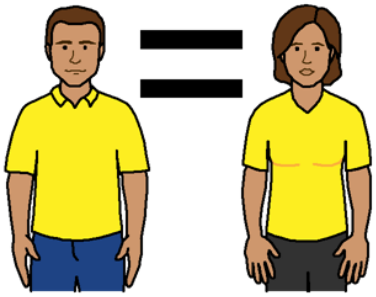
Documents such as the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** say that everyone has the right to mental health.



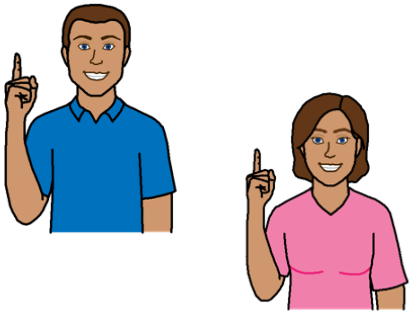
All countries around the world should:



- Make sure everyone has the right to mental health



- Make sure people are **treated fairly**



- Make sure **everyone is aware** of mental health issues.



These issues are important because mental healthcare in many countries **does not** respect human rights.



People with serious mental health issues might find it **difficult** to get the mental healthcare they need **and**:



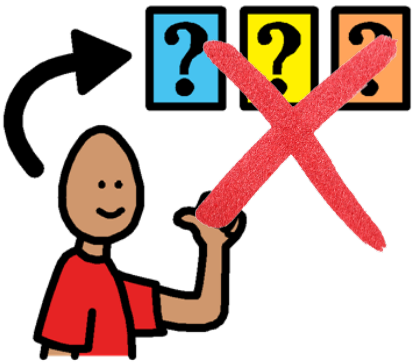
- A job



- Housing



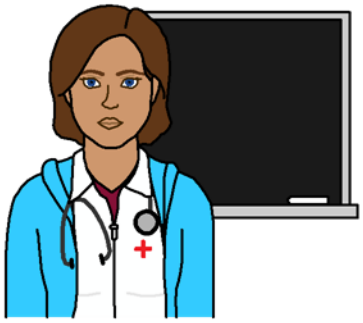
- Education.



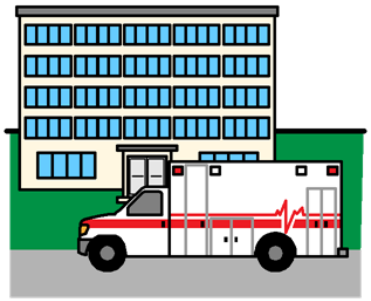
Many people who get mental healthcare **do not make decisions** about:



- Their treatment



- Their healthcare



- Going into hospital.

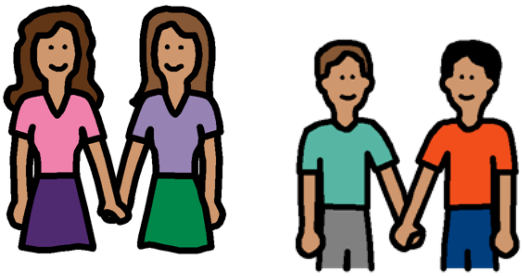


These issues mean people **are not listened to** and **stay in hospital** for longer than they need to.



Also, some people can get **worse treatment** than others if they are:

- Women



- From Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Intersex and Queer communities



- From minorities



- Refugee and migrants.



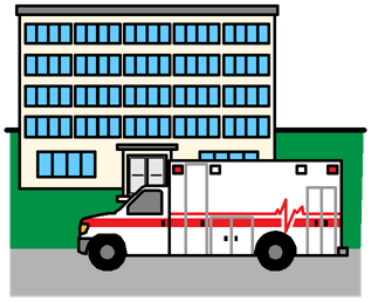
Many countries around the world:



- Allow people to have mental healthcare they do not agree to



- Have mental health services that **do not follow** human rights.



The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities say that being forced to go into hospital is **against** international **human rights.**



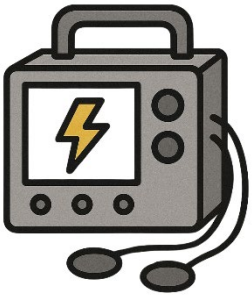
Reports tell us that people who get mental healthcare can get **bad treatment** and might be:



- Kept in chains



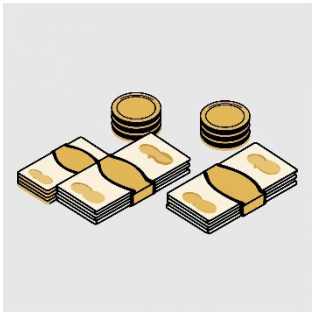
- Given medication they do not want



- Given electric shock therapy.



The report says people should get mental healthcare **in their community** that respects their human rights.



Many countries do not spend enough money on mental healthcare.



A lot of the money for mental healthcare gets spent on big hospitals, not on community care.

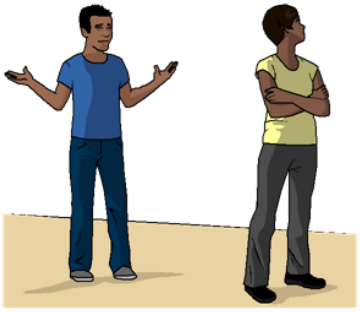


People with mental health issues are more likely to be:

- Poor



- In low-paid jobs



- Treated worse than other people.



The COVID-19 pandemic affected the mental healthcare for people in different groups and minorities.



It can still be difficult for people to get mental healthcare when they need it.

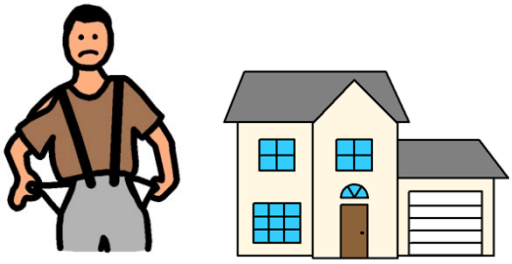


A lot of mental health services focus on:

- Medication



- Caring for people in hospital.



The things that affect mental well-being are ignored, such **as low income** or **poor housing**.

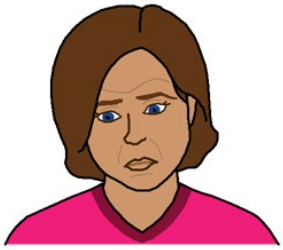




Some groups, such as **women** and **minorities,** are more likely to:



- Take **too much** medication



- Get care that **does not help** the other issues they have in their life.



An increase in mental health issues are linked to:

- Issues at work



- Feeling like you do not belong in the workplace.



The report says it is important for mental health services to link to:

- housing



- jobs



- education



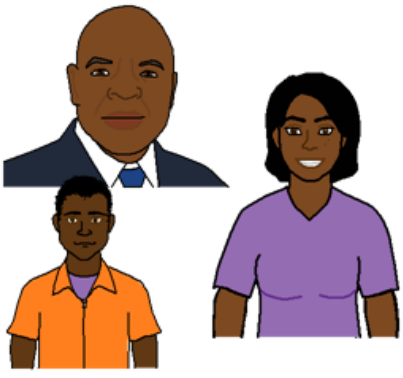
- social support



People with serious mental health issues get treated worse than others.



So they are more likely to be sent to **prison** or a **detention center**.



In some countries people with an African background are even more likely to be sent to prison or a detention centre.



Rather than offering treatment to someone in a **mental health crisis,** the wrong approach might be used and this could result in:



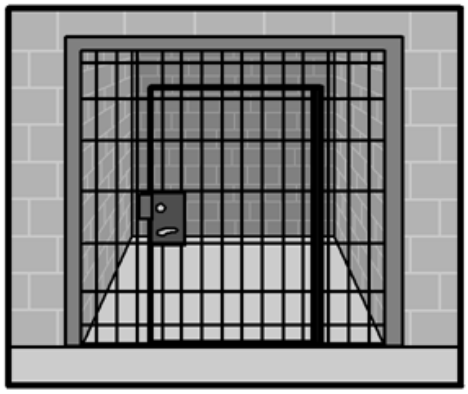
- Use of **force**



- People **going to prison** when they are **not guilty**



- **Violence** against people with mental health issues.



Putting people in a prison cell on their own, in **solitary confinement,** can make mental health worse.

Solitary confinement may be a type of torture – and could mean someone is alone for a long time.



The report says that the following **should not** be a crime:

- suicide



- drug use



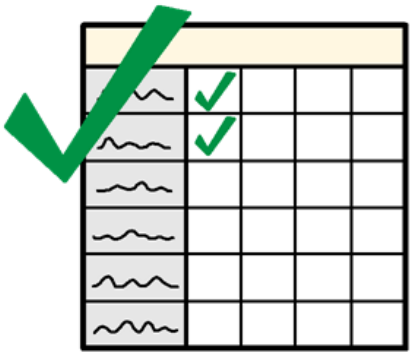
If **suicide** and **drug use** are a crime it stops people from asking for help when they need it.



People who create policies need more information to understand mental health issues.



A lot of mental health laws result in people getting treatment they do not need.



The report says countries should:

- Set up independent organizations to check the treatment of patients who are getting mental healthcare.



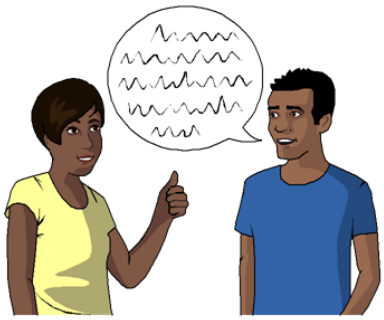
- Make sure people with a lived experience of mental healthcare take part in creating policies.



National laws should include international human rights.



People should not stay in hospital or get mental health treatment they do not agree with.



Everyone who gets mental health treatment should **agree** to have the treatment.



More money should be spent on mental healthcare in the community.



Mental health professionals should get training to provide care in the community.



All types of therapy and treatment that the patient has not agreed to should be **stopped**.



Legal support and other support should be given to:

- People who have mental healthcare they do not agree to



- People with serious mental health issues.



It should be **easier** for people with serious mental health issues to get:

- Housing



- Jobs



- Social welfare programs such as benefits and food stamps.



Training about **human rights** and **mental health** should be given to:



- The police



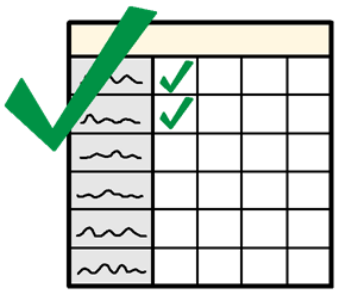
- Mental health professionals



- People who create policies.



Better information should be collected about groups who are affected most by mental health issues.

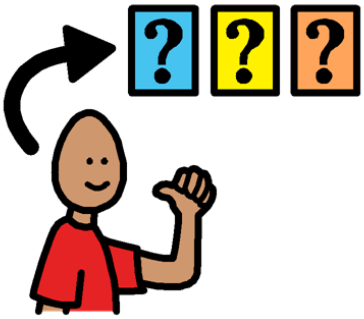


Independent organizations should be set up to check that **human rights are part of** mental healthcare.



People with a lived experience of mental health issues should:

- Have their say about new policies



- Make their own decisions about mental healthcare.



Countries with lower incomes should get support so that human rights are part of their mental healthcare.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights wants to support countries to improve mental health by:



- Working with different regions



- Giving advice on policy



- Working with the **World Health Organization** (WHO).